

in favor of the author of the *Genie du Christianisme*. M. de Montalivet and Savary also acted on this occasion in the most praiseworthy manner, and succeeded in appeasing the first transports of the Emperor's rage. But the name of Chateaubriand constantly called to mind the circumstances which had occasioned him to give in his resignation ; and, besides, Napoleon had another complaint against him. He had published in the *Mercure* an article on a work of M. Alexandre de Laborde. In that article, which was eagerly read in Paris, and which caused the suppression of the *Mercure*, occurred the famous phrase which has been since so often repeated: " In vain a Nero triumphs : Tacitus is already born in his Empire." This quotation leads me to repeat an observation which, I¹ believe, I have already made, viz. that it is a manifest misconception to compare Bonaparte to Nero. Napoleon's ambition might blind his vision to political crimes, but in private life no man could evince less disposition to cruelty or bloodshed. A proof that he bore little resemblance to Nero is that his anger against the author of the article in question vented itself in mere words. " What! " exclaimed he, " does Chateaubriand think I am a fool, and that I do not know what he means ? If he goes on this way I will have him sabred on the steps of the Tuilleries."¹ This language is quite characteristic of Bonaparte, but it was uttered in the first ebullition of his wrath. Napoleon merely threatened, but Nero would have made good his threat; and in such a case there is surely some difference between words and deeds.

¹ The account of the anger of Napoleon is rather exaggerated, and Chateaubriand himself seems to have been the author of the phrase about sabring him on the steps of the Tuilleries. It was Napoleon who had suggested the nomination of Chateaubriand to the Institute; and that the Emperor was not ill-advised in objecting to the discourse presented to him for his inspection seems proved by the fact that Chateaubriand never published it among his works, nor gave any acknowledged text. Napoleon was, however, angry enough to give rise to an amusing scene. Daru, himself an author and a critic, brought the manuscript to the Emperor, who received him alone, and soon worked himself into a passion over the discourse. His furious apostrophes of the absent Chateaubriand were overheard in the antechamber, and believed to be addressed to Daru. Thus, when Dam reappeared, he found himself, to his surprise, shunned by all the men who on his entry had greeted him most warmly; each, however, on ascertaining the truth, assuring him that he had not been duped. See the description in Sainte-Beuve's *Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire*, tome ii. pp. 99-110.